

## Electronic Bulletin Board and Bulletin Board System

### Background of the Invention

#### 5 Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to an electronic bulletin board and bulletin board system, and particularly to an electronic bulletin board and bulletin board system using a client server computer system and/or portable information terminal and a server computer.

### Description of the Related Art

15 Electronic mail is being widely used to communicate messages, not only between computers but also between portable information terminals such as cellular phones and computers, and portable information terminals.

20 Electronic mail is very convenient in that it can be used irrespective of place and time, but it cannot be sent without knowing the e-mail address of the addressed party. For example, when making an appointment to meet someone at a fixed place, a message cannot be sent to the other person via e-mail if one does not know his/her address. In this case, conventionally a handwritten message was left on a blackboard or white board, i.e., a conventional bulletin board.

### Summary of the Invention

30 The present invention provides an electronic bulletin board, aimed at enabling communication between people who have made an appointment to meet (the sender and the receiver), via a common electronic bulletin board at the meeting place.

35 The electronic bulletin board according to the present

-2-

invention comprises an icon message generating portion for receiving a message and generating an icon message; a bulletin board screen generating portion for placing the generated icon message at a designated location; a display portion for receiving the output from said bulletin board screen generating portion and displaying the bulletin board on the screen; and a transmitting/receiving portion for communicating with a mobile information terminal, wherein said icon message generating portion receives a message from said mobile information terminal and converts the message to an icon, receives a request for reading said icon message and restores said icon message, and transmits the restored message to said mobile information terminal.

The electronic bulletin board system according to the present system comprises a plurality of electronic bulletin boards; and a central server which, upon receiving a request from a mobile information terminal to access any one of the plurality of electronic bulletin boards, sends access information to said mobile information terminal, wherein said electronic bulletin board comprises an icon message generating portion for receiving a message and generating an icon message, a bulletin board screen generating portion for placing the generated icon message at a designated location, a display portion for receiving the output from said bulletin board screen generating portion and displaying the bulletin board on the screen; and a transmitting/receiving portion for communicating with a mobile information terminal, wherein said icon message generating portion receives a message from said mobile information terminal and converts the message to an icon, receives a request for reading said icon message and restores said icon message, and transmits the restored message to said mobile information terminal, said central server comprises a database for pre-storing the relationship between the locations of the plurality of electronic bulletin boards and the zones of a plurality of radio base station sites of said mobile information terminal, and said central server receives, together

-3-

said access request, identification information for specifying the radio base station site used for communication by said mobile information terminal, retrieves said database based on said identification information and extracts the most preferred electronic bulletin board from among said plurality of electronic bulletin boards, and transmits access information on the extracted electronic bulletin board to said mobile information terminal.

10       The electronic bulletin board system according to the present invention comprises a plurality of electronic bulletin boards; and a central server which, upon receiving a request from a mobile information terminal to access any one of the plurality of electronic bulletin boards, sends access  
15       information to said mobile information terminal, wherein said electronic bulletin board comprises an icon message generating portion for receiving a message and generating an icon message, a bulletin board screen generating portion for placing the generated icon message at a designated location, a display  
20       portion for receiving the output from said bulletin board screen generating portion and displaying the bulletin board on the screen, and a transmitting/receiving portion for communicating with a mobile information terminal, wherein said icon message generating portion receives a message from said mobile  
25       information terminal and converts the message to an icon, receives a request for reading said icon message and restores said icon message, and transmits the restored message to said mobile information terminal, said central server comprises a database for pre-storing the relationship between the locations  
30       of the plurality of electronic bulletin boards and the zones of a plurality of radio base station sites of said mobile information terminal, and said central server receives, together said access request, identification information for specifying the radio base station site used for communication by said mobile  
35       information terminal, retrieves said database based on said identification information and extracts the most preferred